CLAIMS

1 An antiviral agent capable of combatting replication of a herpesvirus, said agent being capable of disrupting the association between UL8 and POL, wherein "UL8" and "POL" are respectively defined as UL8 of HSV-1 and POL of HSV-1 together with homologues thereof in other herpesviruses.

2 An antiviral agent as claimed in Claim 1 which mimics a portion of UL8.

3 An antiviral agent as claimed in either one of Claims 1 and 2 which is a peptide having a sequence derived from or functionally equivalent to the sequence forming the C-terminal or C-proximal region of UL8.

4 An antiviral agent as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3, said agent being a peptide derived from the C-terminal tail and/or the α-helix portion of the C-terminus of UL8, or a peptidomimetic compound therefor.

5 An antiviral agent as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 4 wherein said agent is a peptide having an amino acid sequence derived from:

a) VFTGVLAGVWGEGGKFVYPFDDKMSFLFA;
b) IELVFTGVLAGVWGEGGKFV;
c) DEWVRSLAVDAQHAAKRVASEGLRFFRLNA;
d) TWLEERDEWVRSLAVDAQHAARRVAS;
e) a portion or functional equivalent thereof.

6 An antiviral agent as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 5 which is a synthetic peptide.

7 An assay to determine the ability of a test substance to interfer with the association of UL8 and POL said assay comprising:

i) providing a first viral component;

ii) exposing said first viral component to a test substance followed by a second viral component, or exposing said first viral component to a second viral component followed by a test substance;

iii) washing to remove any second viral component and/or test substance not associated with the first viral component; and

iv) detecting the presence, and optionally determining the amount, of second viral component associated with said first viral component.

8 An assay as claimed in Claim 7 wherein one of UL8 of HSV-1 and POL of HSV-1 is said first viral component and the other is said second viral component.

9 An assay as claimed in Claim 7 wherein one of UL102 of HCMV and UL54 HCMV is said first viral component and the other is said second viral component.

10 An assay as claimed in any one of Claims 7 to 9 wherein one of said first and second viral components is localised on a surface.

11 An assay as claimed in any one of Claims 7 to 10 wherein an antibody is used to detect association of said viral components.

12 A method of combatting replication of a herpesvirus, said method comprising providing an agent capable of disrupting the association between UL8 and POL.

13 A method of combatting an infection caused by a herpesvirus, said method comprising administering an antiviral agent as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 8.

14 Use of an agent capable of interfering with association of POL/UL8 for combatting herpesvirus replication or infection.